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Horus dn "Cutter," "Severer (Of Heads)"?

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

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
MOST of Professor Keith Seele's field work and research dealt with the New Kingdom. However, as a result of his excavations in Nubia he became involved with important and challenging material from much earlier and much later periods, and he was approaching the many problems involved with probing and creative scholarship. Professor Seele generously gave of his time explaining to me the problems and implications of his A-Group discoveries, and he showed keen, searching interest in questions of the Archaic Period. Thus I wish to dedicate this little study of a First Dynasty Horus-name to the memory of this great scholar and humanist.

Many interpretations have been suggested for the First Dynasty Horus-name written with a hand and water-line: . First, we list those which resort to readings other than the simple *d* + *n*. Sethe's Udimu = “Water-pourer” is still accepted or at least quoted by many authors. Kaplony, followed by several other scholars, transliterates *dwn*, translating “Flügelspreizer” as an epithet of the Horus-falcon.<sup>1</sup> Vladimir Vikentiev uses Wedeni.<sup>2</sup> One of the more picturesque interpretations is *Ny-drt* “Belonging to the Hand (-goddess),” an allusion to the masturbatory creation myth recorded in the Pyramid Texts and later religious literature.<sup>3</sup> Hans Goedicke renders *Ny-wdiw* as “the one who belongs to the giver” (attempting to illustrate names of the same pattern as *Ny-Swth*).<sup>4</sup> We may also mention the reading proposed by Arthur Weigall: “The  is probably the ideogram of the word *udi*, ‘to destroy’ or ‘cast down.’ The  is probably the ground-sign implicit in the meaning, and was not pronounced.”<sup>5</sup>

Many other scholars, following Petrie's straightforward approach, have taken the two hieroglyphs as *d* and *n*, and have read the name as “Den” because they think it the simplest and safest course. Sir Alan Gardiner has remarked: “. . . it seemed better to retain their usual values for the two alphabetic signs with which the name is written.”<sup>6</sup> R. O. Faulkner strongly concurs:

As regards the name of the fifth king of the First Dynasty, it is a good thing that Dr. Edwards has followed Sir Alan Gardiner in reverting to the old reading Den for his name; whatever form the writing *d* + *n* may conceal, *Dn* is what is actually written, and it is time that the fanciful Udimu invented by Sethe was abandoned.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Peter Kaplony, “Sechs Königsnamen der I. Dynastie in neuer Deutung,” *Orientalia Suecana* 7 (1958): 66–67. (Professor Klaus Baer informs me that he also prefers to read *dwn*, but with the meaning “Harpooner.”)

<sup>2</sup> Vladimir Vikentiev, “Études d'épigraphie proto-dynastique I: Quelques cas où  se lit *dñi* et signifie ‘Suc,’” *ASAE* 55 (1958): 7; and “Études d'épigraphie proto-dynastique II: Deux tablettes en ivoire (I dyn.) et les linteaux de Medamoud (XII–XIII<sup>e</sup> dyn.),” *ASAE* 56 (1959): 20–21.

<sup>3</sup> Siegfried Schott, *Hieroglyphen, Untersuchungen zum Ursprung der Schrift*, Abh. Mainz Nr. 24, 1950

(Mainz, 1951), p. 119, n. 1; also discussed in R. T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt* (London, 1959), pp. 43 and 270, n. 13.

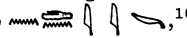


<sup>4</sup> Hans Goedicke, “The Pharaoh *Ny-Swth*,” *ZAS* 81 (1956): 21. For my views on *Ny-Swth*, see my communication in *JEA* 57 (1971): 202–203.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur Weigall, *A History of the Pharaohs I, The First Eleven Dynasties* (London 1925), p. 47.

<sup>6</sup> Sir Alan Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (Oxford, 1966), p. 402.

<sup>7</sup> R. O. Faulkner, in a review of I. E. S. Edwards, *The Early Dynastic Period in Egypt*, in *JEA* 51 (1965): 212.

It must be admitted that the question of values for the signs is inconclusive and probably cannot be settled with certainty. Nonetheless, I think that there are strong methodological merits to the "Occam's Razor" approach, and that if the simplest, most obvious reading (*Dn*) can yield a good meaning, it has a large likelihood of being correct and should be given careful consideration. I suggest the meaning "Cutter" or "One who severs (heads)." The Horus *ḥ3* provides a precedent for the use of bellicose names, and the Na'rmer Palette (close to King *ḥ3* in time) has a scene in which the monarch and his entourage view rows (or a heap?) of decapitated prisoners.

This interpretation of Horus *Dn* may seem open to serious objections, especially since the verb *dn* "kill, sever," is attested in the Middle Kingdom and later,<sup>8</sup> and its use dealing with heads appears in the New Kingdom.<sup>9</sup> Still, a very good case can be made for the presence of *dn* or similar words pertaining to cutting or severing in the Old Kingdom and earlier periods. The form *dney* appears in the Pyramid Texts in the group <sup>10</sup> and commentators translate and analyze it as a derivative or close relative of *dn*. Kurt Sethe comments: "*1284b. ndnj.j* nach dem Ideogramm des Messers wohl von  "abschneiden" abgeleitet, das freilich in den Pyr. sonst noch seine ältere [*sic*]  hat."<sup>11</sup>

Though *zn* has been considered an older word (cf. also *Wb.* V 463), the Pyramid Texts are generally thought to include very old strata of linguistic usage, and I doubt that anyone could demonstrate that the root *dn* pertaining to cutting was not in use during the First Dynasty. Samuel Mercer interprets our group in the Pyramid Texts as even closer to our word: "*1284b. . . .* The verb-form *dnii* is an infinitive of the emphatic, after *n*."<sup>12</sup> Mercer translates the verb in this passage as "divide,"<sup>13</sup> while Faulkner considers the group *ndny* and translates "you have been cut up(?)."<sup>14</sup>

Thus, it is a strong possibility that *dn*-words meaning "cut," "sever," "slice," or the like were in use during the early epochs of Egyptian history, and this realization provides a sensible interpretation of the royal name *Dn*, read simply and at face value as *Dn* and taken in conjunction with contemporary practice as shown on Na'rmer's palette.

Mention should be made of another *dn*-root attested from the Old Kingdom: *\*dnī*, the infinitive *dnt* which accompanies a brewing or kneading scene in the tomb of Ti.<sup>15</sup> However, I think that the interpretation proposed above is far more sensible for the Horus-name *Dn*.

<sup>8</sup> Faulkner, *CDME* 313; *Wb.* V 463.



<sup>9</sup> Faulkner, *CDME* 313; *Wb.* V 463.

<sup>10</sup> *Wb.* V 463, 13; *Belegstellen* V 69, printed part, gives reference as Pyr. 1284.

<sup>11</sup> Kurt Sethe, *Übersetzung und Kommentar zu den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten*, vol. 5 (Hamburg, 1962), p. 200.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel A. B. Mercer, *The Pyramid Texts in Translation and Commentary* 3 (London, 1952), p. 642.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 211.

<sup>14</sup> R. O. Faulkner, *The Ancient Egyptian Pyramid Texts* (Oxford, 1969), pp. 203 and 204, n. 7 (where he states: "*Ndny* lacks a subject, possibly as a result of confusion between the knife-determinative  and the suffix ").

<sup>15</sup> *Wb.* V 464; *Belegstellen*, same reference as n. 10 above, indicates Steindorff, *Das Grab des Ti, Veröffentlichungen der Ernst von Sieghin Expedition in Ägypten*, vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1913), pl. 84.